
LESSON 6

DESERT STORM CASE STUDY:

MEF IN THE OFFENSE

Schwarzkopf recalled after the war that he had assumed the Marine attack would set up the Iraqis for a knock-out blow. But the Marines had routed the Iraqis so quickly that the Army had not yet built up a head of steam for what was to be the main attack.

--Gordon & Trainor,

The General's War

Introduction

Purpose

This lesson describes

wMAGTF's contribution to the Commander-in-Chief's (CINC) campaign plan during the offensive phase known as *Desert Storm*

wHow MAGTF's planning influenced the Marine Expeditionary Force's (MEF) offensive operations and maneuver warfare in Southwest Asia (SWA)

Why Study *Desert Storm*?

w*Desert Storm* serves as a superb case study of the MAGTF in the offensive and the attempt to implement the principles of the maneuver warfare philosophy.

wUnderstanding maneuver warfare through the example of Operation *Desert Storm* will help you effectively plan and execute operations, not only at the MAGTF level, but at the CINC/Joint Task Force (JTF) levels.

wThis lesson highlights the critical role of the commander and the impact of his leadership in successfully fighting the MEF.

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Introduction, Continued

**Relationship to
Other
Instruction**

wThis case study takes the foundation of operational art and campaign analysis built during the *Operational Level of War* (8803) course and solves operational problems through proper employment of joint force components.

wEssentially, this lesson relates to all previous and subsequent topics of the 8800 Program courses. This case study augments follow-on lessons, which cover how to shape the battlespace and plan the single battle incorporating the capabilities of each major subordinate element.

Study Time

This lesson, including the issues for consideration, will require approximately 6 hours of study.

Educational Objectives

Offensive Planning	Evaluate I MEF offensive planning for the execution of MAGTF operations in Operation <i>Desert Storm</i> in support of the joint campaign. [JPME 1(e), 3(a), 3(d), and 4(e)]
Tactical Offense and Maneuver	Analyze the forms of tactical offense employed and forms of maneuver executed by I MEF during Operation <i>Desert Storm</i> .
Influences on Offensive Operations	Determine the issues and considerations that influenced the commander in organizing and distributing his forces for offensive operations in Operation <i>Desert Storm</i> . [JPME 3(a)]
Shaping the Battlespace	Demonstrate an understanding of the methods employed by I MEF in Operation <i>Desert Storm</i> to shape the battlespace as part of a joint/coalition force and in support of MEF decisive offensive operations. [JPME 2(d) and 3(d)]
Roles, Missions, and Challenges	Explain the roles, missions, and challenges of each element (CSSE, ACE, GCE, and CE) of I MEF in preparation for, and execution of, offensive operations during Operation <i>Desert Storm</i> . [JPME 1(a) and 3(a)]
Maneuver Warfare	Examine the tenets of maneuver warfare as they were, or were not, employed during Operation <i>Desert Storm</i> . [JPME 3(b)]
JPME Areas/ Objectives/Hours (accounting data)	1/a/0.5 1/e/0.5 2/d/0.5 3/a/1.0 3/b/0.5 3/d/1.0 4/e/0.5

Discussion

Maneuver Warfare

WOperation *Desert Storm* occurred under the 29th Commandant, General A. M. Gray, Jr., and became the Marine Corps' first test of maneuver since its conception in the 1980s. The success of I MEF is not in question. During this study, you should consider the planning for and execution of how the MEF supported the overall joint and multinational campaign plan.

WAs you read through this case study, you should seek answers to the following:

WWhether or not I MEF adhered to the imperatives of the offense.
WTo what extent did I MEF adhere to the tenets of maneuver warfare.

Planning Issues

WThe basic nuts and bolts of putting the plan together was not a simple process, and the planned scheme of maneuver changed a few times before the final plan was executed. During Operation *Desert Storm*, LTGEN Walter E. Boomer, sought to shorten his own force's cycle of observation, orientation, decision, and action (OODA) loop to less than that of the Iraqis.

WIssues relating to fighting multiple GCEs, allocating space, fighting with an Army brigade OPCON to the MEF, and the relationship of the Naval component were key events that required close examination.

Staff Planning Process

To give the ground commanders a significant edge on the battlefield, General Boomer's staff used a planning process that included:

WIntelligence Preparation of the Battlefield (IPB)
WClear and concise commander's Intent
WThorough mission analysis (Mission, Enemy, Terrain and Weather, Troop and Support-Time-Space/Logistics (METT-T-S/L))
WCentralized planning and decentralized execution by commanders
WIssuance of mission type orders

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Discussion, Continued

MCPP

The six-step Marine Corps Planning Process (MCPP), which is detailed in *Marine Corps Planning Process* (8805), was employed in Southwest Asia to determine missions and subsequent actions.

Step	Action
1	Mission Analysis
2	Course of Action (COA) Development
3	COA Analysis
4	COA Comparison/Decision
5	Order Development
6	Transition

USCENTCOM Mission

The mission of USCENTCOM is directed by the National Command Authority (NCA). During *Desert Storm*, the U.S. Commander-in-Chief Central Command (USCINCCENT) must

wConduct offensive operations to eject Iraqi forces from Kuwait
wDestroy Iraqi warfighting capability
wDefend Kuwait

CENTCOM's Campaign Plan

USCENTCOM's campaign plan was divided into four phases. Study the four phases to understand their importance.

Phase	Action
1	Strategic Air Offensive
2	Air Offensive in the Kuwaiti Theater of Operations
3	Air Offensive Battlefield Preparation
4	Ground Offensive

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Discussion, Continued

USMARCENT Mission

The mission of U.S. Marines Forces Central Command (USMARCENT) is directed by USCINCCENT. In *Desert Storm*, the USMARCENT must

- wAttack to fix and destroy Iraqi forces in zone
 - wPrevent reinforcement of Iraqi forces facing Arab Corps in the west
 - wEstablish blocking position to preclude retreat of Iraqi forces from southeast Kuwait
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Shaping Concept

Shaping refers to the lethal and nonlethal actions designed to create conditions for successful operations. The shaping concept is formulated to achieve a desired end state. The shaping components refer to

- wShaping objectives
 - wShaping actions
 - w Battlespace environment elements
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Shaping Objectives

wShaping objectives are actions initiated to create desired conditions within the battlespace environment. Shaping actions can include

- wDirect Attack
- wThreat of Action
- wDeception
- wPsychological Operations
- wElectronic Warfare (EW)
- wForce Protection
- wCivil Affairs

w Battlespace environment elements considered are

- wInfrastructure
 - wThreat Aspects
 - wCivilian Aspects
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Discussion, Continued

Shaping the Battlespace

Consider the MEF's efforts to "shape" the battlespace before the commencement of ground offensive combat. The ultimate goal of these actions was to force the Iraqi army into an untenable situation on the ground and set conditions for a sweeping victory by the MEF. The battlespace had been shaped with aviation, intelligence, and deception and was led to the exposure of the Iraqis' critical vulnerabilities, thereby causing the total collapse of Iraqi forces in the Kuwaiti Theater of Operations.

Battlespace Shaping in Southwest Asia

The different phases of the Central Command's (CENTCOM) battlespace shaping while in Baghdad during Operation *Desert Storm* are shown below:

Phase	Command	Action	Operational Planning
1	CENTCOM	Targeting	
2	MEF	Close Operations	Forward Edge of Battle Area (FEBA)
3	CINC/JFC	Deep Operations	Fire Support Coordination Line (FSCL)
4	MEF	Rear Operations	

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Required Reading

MAGTF Operations Readings

Quilter, Charles J., Colonel, USMCR. *U.S. Marines in the Persian Gulf, 1990-1991: With the I Marine Expeditionary Force in Desert Shield and Desert Storm*. History and Museums Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps: Washington, DC, 1993, pp. 3 through 112. Find this reading in the *MAGTF Operations Readings*, Annex D, pp. D-3 to D-114. This monograph takes you with I MEF from the invasion and occupancy of Kuwait by the Iraqis to the end of Operation *Desert Storm* when all Marines departed Saudi Arabia.

For Further Study

Supplemental Readings

The following readings are **not** required. They are provided as recommended sources of additional information about topics in this lesson that may interest you. They will increase your knowledge and augment your understanding of this lesson.

WGordon, Michael R. and Trainor, Bernard E., LtGen, USMC, (Ret). *The Generals War*. Little, Brown and Company: New York, 1995, Chapter 8, pp. 159 through 177, Chapter 13, pp. 267 through 288, and Chapter 17, pp. 355 through 374.

WCureton, Charles H., LtCol, USMCR. *U.S. Marines in the Persian Gulf, 1990-1991: With the 1st Marine Division in Desert Shield and Desert Storm*. History and Museums Division, Headquarters U.S. Marine Corps: Washington, DC, 1993.

WMroczkowski, Dennis P., LtCol, USMCR. *U.S. Marines in the Persian Gulf, 1990-1991: With the 2nd Marine Division in Desert Shield and Desert Storm*. History and Museums Division, Headquarters U.S. Marine Corps: Washington, DC, 1993.

Issues for Consideration

Offensive Planning	How did I MEF's offensive planning for the execution of MAGTF operations support the joint campaign in Operation <i>Desert Storm</i> ?
Tactical Offense and Maneuver	What forms of tactical offense were employed by I MEF in Operation <i>Desert Storm</i> ? What forms of maneuver were executed by I MEF?
Influences on Offensive Operations	What issues and considerations influence the commander in organizing and distributing the forces for offensive operations in <i>Desert Storm</i> ?
Shaping the Battlespace	How did deep operations relate to battlespace shaping in Southwest Asia?
Roles, Missions, and Challenges	What were the roles and missions of each element of I MEF during <i>Desert Storm</i> ? Specifically, in what ways did I MEF act to ensure the success of the GCE?
Maneuver Warfare	What is the ultimate aim of Maneuver Warfare and how did it prove to be of value to I MEF operations in SWA? Are we placing too much emphasis on the "lessons learned" from Operations <i>Desert Shield</i> and <i>Desert Storm</i> ? Is this a valid criticism? Why?